

"Jack Shealy"

<ochopeeskunkape@gmail.com>

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To "Damon" <damon\_doumlele@nps.gov>

cc <info@evergladeschamber.com>,  
<Thomas\_Strickland@ios.doi.gov>,  
<monica.aranegui@mail.house.gov>,  
<michelle\_mcgovern@billnelson.senate.gov>,  
<jimcolleta@colliergov.net>,  
<Commissioners@myfwc.com>

Subject Comments to Big Cypress Nat. Prsr'v. ORV committee members and ORV web site

Dear ORV Advisory Committee Members,

The purpose of our comments to you is to let you know how we here at Trail Lakes Campground(TLC) feel about NPS's idea of re-locating the ORV trail North of Monroe Station to the Northeast corner of Monument Lake.

We cannot support this concept and especially don't support any modification of Monument Lake Campground to facilitate Special ORV oriented campsites as was done at Burns Lake Campground. Our opposition is not due to any bias against the ORV community since we love accessing the Big Cypress National Preserve with ORV's as much as anyone. Our main problem with this concept is that it will cause adverse financial consequences to not only our campground but others businesses nearby. Our business is and has been experiencing a steady decline since the creation of BCNP due to their campgrounds not even having to break even much less make a profit to sustain their operation. Believe it or not NPS at Big Cypress is snagging 50,000= overnight campsite stays per year according to their own statistics. That is a severe bad impact to privately owned and operated campgrounds such as ours in Big Cypress and others in Everglades City. All they have to do to survive is take some more of every ones tax money and pour it into their so-called improvements. We on the other hand at TLC and elsewhere must pay our own way plus give the gov't. our taxes to further destroy our economic future.

The ORV committee was told by NPS that the reason for this trail re-location was their concerns for every ones safety. We question this claim because we've lived in the preserve our entire lives and don't recall hearing of any accidents between ORV's and autos traveling US 41 in close proximity to Monroe Station ever. We suspect there may be a very different reason for NPS to desire the change they have brought to the committee.

That other reason might be NPS's plan to restore Monroe Station by building some sort of a museum/concession operation there thus the need to sweep the ORV's and the associated cultural linkage out of sight and out of mind. In doing so the new NPS facility will maintain the neat and tidy NPS image and simultaneously put another nail in our local Gladesmen's culture's coffin. Possibly ORV committee members should bring this up at the next meeting in February if you are allowed to do so.. From what we've been told NPS got a grant to begin this restoration project years ago since Monroe Station was put on the National Register of Historic Places.

Please don't interpret this as us asking for a handout. We are actually hoping for nothing more than for the committee to conscientiously take our concerns into consideration before they make a recommendation to NPS. We would appreciate this since it doesn't seem that NPS has or they wouldn't be contemplating more so-called improvements to further injure local neighboring businesses.

It is somewhat infuriating to us that NPS's ORV Plan was careful to ban all of the pre-existing convenient ORV access our customers had enjoyed to the BCNP for decades while they- NPS decides to offer their specially designed ORV campsites to our former customers for free or at what we consider well below cost. We don't fault anyone for taking that deal but that doesn't mean it is moral or right, or fair. In our opinion this actually violates the Senate Report that accompanied the Enabling Act for the BCNP that states clearly that **NO** facilities will be built in BCNP unless warranted for maintenance or visitor **safety**. Oops there's the **safety** word maybe that is why safety issue came out of thin air as a reason to build facilities that shouldn't be constructed according to the Senate Report. We all complain about our politicians but they were very sensible and clear on this issue.

Since reading the comments on the PEPC site regarding this issue we would agree with Mr. Fuller's much more frugal and sensible idea of putting up a couple of blinking lights to solve the currently non-existent **safety** problem and also preserve the existing ORV trail leading to Monroe Station constructed at great cost to we taxpayers.

One other issue we would like to bring to your attention is that TLC would greatly appreciate your committee revisiting a decision y'all made previously to not recommend the old pre-existing trail across the street from TLC to be included in the Turner River Unit trail system. This trail was recommended by multiple persons at NPS's meetings at their hqtr's. pavilion on this subject. The ORV sub-committee on trails scratched it off the list brought to the main committee due to their belief it wasn't allowable under the ORV plan. This could be an accurate interpretation but an alternative would be for the Advisory Committee to recommend that NPS open the EIS up to reconsider this along with other issues other visitors have such as routing trails through the buffer zones in Turner River and Corn Dance units into portions of the Addition that are South of I-75. These are both serious BCNP issues that need to be resolved before any codification of this plan's implementation.

From what we have learned studying your FACA charter and the FACA system in general this committee has the power to make any recommendation they choose to without any interference from NPS. The committee's advice does not have to be implemented by NPS but at least in doing so your thoughts would be in the public records of this Nation and a testament to the desires of we the public that you are perceived by others to represent. Whether you committee members believe it or not we here at TLC believe your committee has a lot of power since NPS needs your recommendations to defend and provide the foundation for their ORV plan implementation. Please take advantage of that power to see that the right outcomes happen.

Yes this is a long winded letter but the newly adopted public speaking protocol of this committee has forced us to communicate this way to you. For unknown reasons a decision was made to prohibit a proxy speaker speaking on our behalf from addressing the ORV committee face to

face at their meetings. That would be the only method of us addressing you in person since the business operations do not afford us the ability of attending in person. Again we don't fault the committee but none the less that decision is disturbing to us.

In closing we will thank you for your efforts. We also would appreciate the committee expeditiously taking up the issues mentioned here as they are all related to the implementation of this ORV plan.

Best Regards,

David Shealy

Jack Shealy

Owners Trail Lakes Campground and Souvenir Shop